

A Red, Red Rose
by: Robert Burns

O my Luve's like a Red, Red Rose
That's newly sprung in June:
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune!

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I:
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

Meaning: This poem is about the poet's love for a young girl. He uses two main similes to explain the beauty of his love. He says that his love is like a fresh rose. He also says that it is like a beautiful song. So he starts the poem with a declaration of the beauty of his new love. He goes on to state that he will love this young woman till the seas are dried up. So even though his love is like a rose, it will surely last longer than roses, which are known to fade. Not content to just assert that he will love her till the seas are dry, the poet continues on to say that he will love her till rocks are melted by the sun. This means that his love will last forever.

Type of Work and Year of Composition: "Red Red Rose" is a love poem written to be sung. Robert Burns based it on a folk version of a song he heard on his travels. Burns completed the poem in 1794 in an English dialect called Scots for publication in collections of traditional Scottish ballads.

Format: Burns wrote the poem in four quatrains (four-line stanzas) with the following characteristics:

End Rhyme: In each stanza, the second and fourth lines end with masculine rhyme¹. End Rhyme also occurs in the first and third lines of the third and fourth stanzas.

Meter: Most of the longer lines are in iambic tetrameter²; the shorter ones, in iambic trimeter³. Iambic tetrameter is an eight-syllable line with alternating pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables. Each pair makes up a foot so that each tetrameter line has four feet, as in line 5 :

AS FAIR | art THOU | my BON, | nie LASS

Iambic trimeter is a six-syllable line with alternating pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables. Each pair makes up a foot so that each trimeter line has three feet, as in line 2 of the first stanza:

That's NEW | ly SPRUNG | in JUNE

Theme: A theme of love, loving beauty or loving someone beautiful is part of the theme. Burns clearly states and restates the theme: The speaker loves the young lady beyond measure. The only way he can express his love for her is through vivid similes and hyperbolic comparisons.

Tone: Romantic.

Mood: Romantic, Melancholic, Optimistic.

Figures of speech

1. simile
"O, my love is like a red, red rose,"
"O, my love is like the melody,"
2. HYPERBOLE
"And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry"
"And I will come again, my love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!"
3. Imagery
"O, my love is like a red, red rose,"
"Till a' the seas gang dry"
4. Anastrophe
"So deep in love am I,"
5. PERSONIFICATION
"While the sands o' life shall run."

¹ It's a single-syllable rhyme at the very end of a line.

² a line consisting of four iambic feet.

³ a meter of poetry consisting of three iambic units per line.

"A Red, Red Rose" is a love poem written to be sung (Ballad). It consists of four quatrains (four-line stanzas). It has a common meter, alternative iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. The rhyme scheme for the first and second stanzas is ABCB, and for the third and fourth stanzas is ABAB. It was written by Robert Burns, a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland and is celebrated worldwide. He is the best known of the poets who have written in the Scots language, although much of his writing is also in English and a light Scots dialect, accessible to an audience beyond Scotland.

The poem opens with one of the most famous simile of all time. The speaker is comparing his love to a "A Red, Red Rose". The red color symbolizes love and passion. He is saying that his love is like a really red rose that is "newly sprung in June". In other words, the speaker's love is like a flower that has just emerged from the ground. Which means that his love is new, fresh, and young. Then he compares his love to a lovely melody that is sweetly played in tune. A sweet melody usually makes people feel happy, so he feels happy whenever his beloved is beside him.

In the second stanza, the speaker addresses the young lady as "bonnie lass" (a pretty girl). Then he admits that he is so fall in love, and asserts his love in hyperbolic terms that he would continue his love still until all the seas dry up.

The speaker continues his exaggerating mood linked to the previous stanza and states that he will continue to love his lady till the rocks melts with the sun, or the life leads to desert of death. In other words, he will love his lady for a long time, as long as he lives.

In the last stanza, suddenly it's time to say goodbye. The phrase "fare thee weel a while" means something like "farewell, for now" or it could also mean "take care of yourself for now". The speaker tells his lady that though he must leave her for a while, he will return for her even if he must travel ten thousand miles.

To sum up, the poem is one of the most famous love poems in the English language, and it's pretty clear why; the entire poem is an expression of the speaker's powerful, undying love. Line after line, he lets us know his love is lasting, for real. Along with the theme of love, we can see the presence of nature (rocks, seas, sand, and roses).